

FACT SHEET

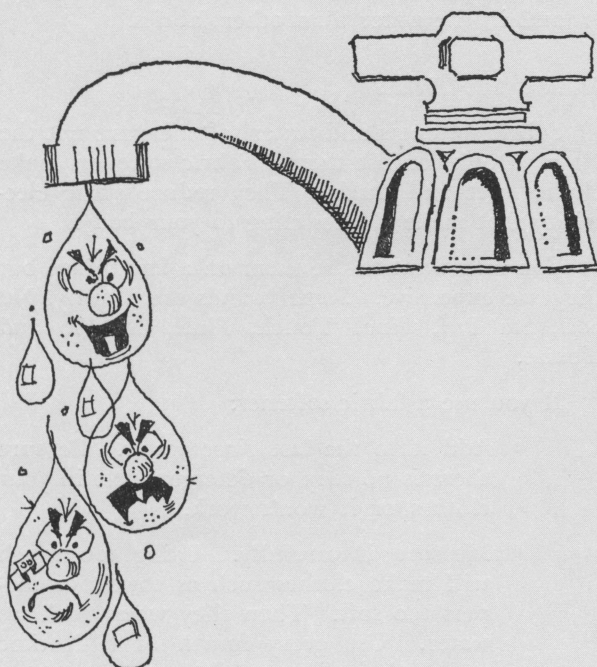
12-2-69
REC 20000
new - Myers + Jacobsen

L-800

Focusing on Clean Clothes...

THE WATER YOU USE

Doris Myers and Linda Jacobsen
Extension Specialists in Home Management
Texas A&M University



HARD WATER

The ring around a bathtub is caused by "hard water." The minerals in the water combine with the soap to form curds that stick to the tub. Rocky deposits in tea kettles and stopped up steam irons are caused by hard water.

Hardness is measured in grains per gallon. Water in homes usually falls between 3 and 30 grains per gallon. Detergents have a conditioner in them that works well if the water is not over 10 grains hard. If you have city water, the water department can tell you how hard it is. If you have a well, you can get your water checked in some appliance departments. You can buy a testing kit and do it yourself.

Hard water causes laundry problems. Minerals in hard water combine with soap causing it to form scum or curds instead of washing clothes. Hard water needs more soap or detergent, and

clothes don't get as clean as they do in soft water. Soft water does a better job of rinsing clothes than hard water. Your clothes will turn gray if it isn't rinsed out. To get rid of graying, more soap or detergent and possibly a water softener is needed.

Detergents work well in both soft and hard water, unless the water is especially hard.

HOW TO SOFTEN WATER

You usually don't need to soften water for detergents, unless it is extremely hard. You can soften water with a powder that you buy in a package. Or you can buy or rent a machine that softens water. Find out how much the machine costs. Figure out how much the powder costs, too.

If you use a powder, follow directions on the package. They usually say to add enough to make the water feel slippery.

Non-Precipitating Softeners (Water Conditioners)

Water softeners such as Calgon, Spring Rain, Oakite and White King hold minerals in the water so they can't cause soap scum. The water stays clear.

These softeners can redissolve soap scum already on clothes. By washing these clothes in hot water with this type of softener, the soap scum will dissolve and wash out. This is called stripping or conditioning clothes.

If your water contains minerals, such as iron, non-precipitating water softeners will prevent the minerals from staining your clothes. Add water softener to the wash water before you add the soap, detergent or bleach. Use water softener in the rinse water, too.

Precipitating Softeners

Water softeners such as Borax, Rain Drops, Sal Soda, Climalene and Melo settle out the minerals that make the water hard. The water gets cloudy. The water softener should be dissolved in the wash

water before the soap is added because the soap scum cannot be dissolved once it has formed. Add the softener to the first rinse water, too. Rinse the clothes again to wash out the mineral settlements.

Precipitating softeners work better in wringer washers (non-automatic) than in automatics, because you lift the clothes out of the water instead of spinning the water out of the clothes.

WATER TEMPERATURE

Hot Water

- Is needed to get dirt out of very dirty items.
- Kills more germs than cold water.
- Is best for white cottons and linens.
- May cause some colors to fade.
- Wrinkles some modern fabrics like permanent press.

Medium Water

- Usually gets lightly-soiled clothes clean.
- Does not kill germs unless you add a disinfectant.
- Is better for cleaning than warm water.

Warm Water

- Usually gets lightly-soiled clothes clean.
- Is best for delicate clothing, silk and washable woolens.
- Is comfortable for hand washing.
- Does not kill germs unless you add a disinfectant.

Cold Water

- Use a cold water detergent or dissolve detergent in hot water before adding to wash water.
- Is for lightly-soiled or thoroughly pre-treated items.
- Gives least wrinkling to modern fabrics.
- Gives the least cleaning of clothes.

NOTE: Water in the washing machine is cooler than the water in the water heater. For very hot water in the washer, you may need to set the heater temperature high.

AMOUNT OF WATER

Good washing action takes plenty of room for clothes to move around. Never crowd the tub or pack clothes into the machine. Water, detergent, bleach and other washing aids must be able to go through the clothes to loosen and carry away the soil.

Modern fabrics need even more room to move around in the water than other fabrics.

FABRIC SOFTENERS

Fabric softeners and water softeners are not the same. Don't confuse them. Fabric softeners make clothes soft and fluffy. They reduce static electricity that make clothes cling to your body.

You may want to use them on a few things but they are expensive. Some brands are Downy, Nu Soft, Sta Puf, Final Touch, Fluff, Sta Flo and Texize.

If you use a fabric softener:

- Add it to the last rinse water. Be sure there is no soap or detergent left in your clothes or it won't work.
- Measure it carefully. Using too much will make clothes such as towels or diapers too soft. Then they won't soak up water. Use every fourth or fifth time you wash for best results.

These trade names are used only to help you know what to look for. Many other companies make and sell water softeners and fabric softeners. The Texas Agricultural Extension Service does not recommend one kind more than another.

References:

Home Laundering: The Equipment and the Job, Home and Garden Bulletin No. 101, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., October 1964.